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ABSTRACT

This study attempted to record possible changes in individual students involved in a "teaching tolerance" program. Approximately 70 high school students enrolled in a "Participation in Government" class were analyzed qualitatively to determine whether individuals experience a change in attitudes toward those different from themselves. Writing samples, an open-ended survey, interviews before and after video-viewing, and observations were used to gather data. The paper concludes that the program worked on various levels within the classes due to the resource materials presented and the opportunities to explore diverse viewpoints among class members. (EH)

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THE OUTCOMES OF TEACHING TOLERANCE: A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT FOR MILESKI PROJECT - THE OUTCOMES OF TEACHING TOLERANCE

Intolerance is a persistent problem throughout the United States. It is the responsibility of educators to address this issue in classrooms. By attempting to create more tolerant students, a more secure, stable learning institution can be achieved. The purpose of this study was to provide evidence that employing a teaching tolerance curriculum will create more tolerant individuals.

This study was conducted in a Participation in Government class using, among other sources, materials distributed by the Southern Poverty Law Center, entitled "Teaching Tolerance". The materials included an award nominated documentary, "The Shadow of Hate" and a publication entitled Us and Them. Each of these materials is a conglomeration of historical accounts of intolerance against various groups of people since the beginning of European settlement in what is now the United States. This study was conducted to prove the relevance and importance of programs like "Teaching Tolerance". In order for this country to move forward we have to acknowledge the problems of today and continue to work to correct them.

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INTRODUCTION

An inescapable problem facing educators today is that of intolerance within the classroom. This intolerance hinders the learning process for all individuals. It is common knowledge among the education community that learning is facilitated when the classroom provides a safe, comfortable environment. Conversely, when students treat each other with disrespect and are intolerant of other members of the class disrupting what may be an environment conducive to learning, a day's lesson in any subject can become quite difficult to understand.

Intolerance is fueled by racism. As a result, bigoted individuals discriminate against or are intolerant of people whether these people are of a different race, ethnic background, or sexual orientation from themselves. Intolerance is a persistent problem plaguing many school districts across the United States. Even though strides forward were made during the 1950's and 1960's with the dismantling of the "separate but equal" doctrine, racism has not disappeared. Incidents of racially motivated violence have been increasing in recent years. In fact, a recent report issued by the Southern Poverty Law Center states that the number of hate groups in the United States may have increased as much as 20% between 1996-1997. (Sack, 1998) Because prejudice is still pervasive in the country, teachers must find ways to resolve tensions in the educational system. Intuitively, by lessening the racial conflict, violence within the schools would be reduced in addition to providing a more conducive environment to expedite the

learning process.

There is a great deal of literature on prejudice dating back through the 1950's. Many researchers of 1990's concur with the conclusions made by earlier researchers on why prejudice exists noting that parental interactions and relationships with children from birth have a large impact on the tolerance of that particular child. Yet contemporary researchers including Sara Bullard and Jan Arnow have moved forward in formulating ways of "teaching tolerance" in schools. These various methods of raising consciousness through story, speech or video are new and little research has been done on whether they in fact do create more tolerant individuals. More specifically, what changes do occur in students that participate in such programs?

The focus of this study is to record possible changes in individual students involved in a "teaching tolerance" program. The study will be a qualitative analysis involving approximately 70 high school students enrolled in a Participation in Government class. In order to collect data, reaction writing samples will be obtained and an open ended survey will be completed a few months after the close of the unit. In addition to the writings and survey of all 70 participants, 4 students will be interviewed before and after the completion of the program for any verbal comments that may be helpful in understanding the possible impact of this particular program. Ideally, the interviewing approach will uncover a more in depth perspective on an individual's tolerance or lack thereof.

By studying and recording the impact of teaching tolerance

programs, teachers will be more apt to use the programs in their classrooms if in fact the programs do work. No educator can contest the need for a more tolerant nation, yet there has to be more evidence that programs such as "Teaching Tolerance" do make a difference in order to encourage more teachers to adapt the programs.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Research on prejudice and intolerance is plentiful. Most authors regardless of the decade, share many similar ideas explaining the causes of prejudice and even though they share common ground on ways to counteract intolerance, they vary in ways of approaching the problem in the classroom. This literature review will attempt to provide a starting point for a master's project on "teaching tolerance", a concept that is spreading throughout the nation.

During the 1950's, researchers were asked to examine the effects of segregated society in the south. Yet to understand the effects of segregation, prejudices and racism had to be explored as well. Bruno Bettelheim wrote a innovative publication in 1953 entitled "Overcoming Prejudice" which described racism as everybody's problem. Other ideas discussed in "Overcoming Prejudice" coincided with researchers of more recent years including the rejection of the concept that the United States is a "melting pot" of different people.

Tolerance is defined by Webster as the capacity for or the practice of recognizing and respecting the beliefs and practices of others. One of this nation's greatest attributes is in its

heterogeneous society and "we shall improve human relations by learning to live with the racial and cultural pluralism that surrounds us." (Allport, 1954, p. 501) On the other hand, expecting people of various ethnic backgrounds and religions to assimilate to one culture may cause confusion within one's identity as well as resentment.

Gordon Allport's The Nature of Prejudice was another revolutionary publication of the 1950's that continues to carry weight today. The Nature of Prejudice explores the psychological roots of prejudice "for without the knowledge of the roots of hostility we can not hope to employ our intelligence effectively in controlling its destructiveness." (1954, p. xv) Allport acknowledges that prejudice begins in infants 6-8 months old as seen when a baby cries as a stranger approaches. (1954, p. 130) Yet although it is instinctive for a child to cry at someone "different", parents should not nurture those feelings of apprehensiveness.

Allport, like Bettelheim, believes that parents and teachers are the root of the problem. In Allport's findings, tolerant children came from homes with permissive atmospheres. The children felt welcomed, accepted and loved. The children had less of a "threat orientation" (1954, p. 426) Conversely, if segregation, authoritarianism, and hierarchy dominate the home "the child can not help but learn that power and status are the dominant factors in a human relationship." (Allport, 1954, p. 511) Children pick up strong messages from their parents and follow examples set before

them.

Another study, conducted by Selma Hirsh, recorded that parents of unprejudiced children were more concerned with the individual qualities and aptitudes of their young. These parents also emphasized their offsprings' uniqueness. On the other hand, parents of more prejudiced children emphasized normality or having their children behave "like everyone else". Hirsh went one step farther to explain that sympathy, understanding and acceptance of one's self and therefore others must be learned in childhood if it is to become a permanent character trait. (Hirsh 1955, p. 117)

Contemporary researchers such as Patricia Ramsey acknowledge that children grow up in an environment where there is "a lot of wariness of differences". (1995, p. 12) David Aronson explains that kids "want the world to be divided up into easy pieces; good and bad, black and white... Because kids think in such absolute terms they may have trouble understanding how people can be similar in some ways and different in other." (1995, p. 24) It is then the adults' responsibility to explain that regardless if these similarities and differences exist, all people should be treated equally.

Most researchers agree that prejudice is a learned behavior. Yet it is a behavior that is learned at a very young age and therefore it must be addressed at that time. (Byrnes, 1988) If left unaddressed, children will assume that discrimination and racism are acceptable practices. "Failure to address prejudice and discrimination from an individual and societal perspective allows

these major social problems to remain unexamined. (Byrnes, 1995, p. 267) With the understanding of differences of people throughout the nation as well as the world, children will even begin to better appreciate themselves.

It is clear that racism begins at a young age and parents play a pivotal role in the development of a tolerant youth, but why is that parent tolerant or intolerant? Learning prejudice and learning tolerance are subtle and complex processes and once again researchers seem to agree that basic character traits are needed in a tolerant individual. Self awareness, self expression, and self esteem are all a part of a tolerant individual. (Aronson, 1995) You must be secure with yourself, then you can be secure with others.

Another reason as to why people are prejudiced relates to their fear of "differences" and "xenophobia". Prejudice is used to conceal an individuals apprehensiveness just as an alcoholic will use alcohol to conceal his insecurities. The difference being that instead of converting fear into heavy drinking, a prejudice person converts fear into hate. (Hirsh, 1995, p.43) Optimistically, instead of fearing differences, people should learn to appreciate differences and to learn from them, thereby becoming more tolerant "whole" individuals.

One distinction must be made at this point. Labeling or grouping is normal. It enables us to store a great deal of information in our minds, yet it must be emphasized that grouping things together does not give us the whole picture. (Gersten, 1974) Although some groups of people may have different characteristics,

they also share many similar characteristics with other groups. Therefore, one group of people should not be treated any differently than another group based on their ethnic or racial background, because they are all human beings.

Stereotyping was another concept referred to by many researchers. As defined, stereotypes conform or standardize a person or group of people. Childhood stories encourage stereotypes in favorites like "Hansel and Gretel" and "Snow White". These stories associate ugliness or physical deformities with evil, while beauty is associated with kindness and gentleness. This type of symbolism may lead children to see disabilities as the result or the cause of something evil. Therefore "students should be assisted in learning to identify their own stereotypes, overgeneralizations and labeling" as well as learning to distinguish between grouping and stereotyping. (Byrnes, 1988, p. 268) When individuals, be it a child, adolescent, or adult, can identify a particular stereotype or label, knowing what it is, they will be able to make a more valid judgment.

There are a multitude of ideas offered by educators and researchers on specific ways to combat intolerance in the classroom. Most approaches could be used at all grade levels and although parents should be involved in creating a more tolerant atmosphere for all children, concentration should take place in the school where the children represent "a vast captive audience and they study what is set before them". (Allport, 1954, p 511)

Exercise in critical thinking is one way to counteract racism.

"We tend to accept ideas without question. That can make us prejudiced." In addition, teachers must teach students to "think critically about knowledge and life. When using critical thinking our actions are grounded in reasoned judgment, in thorough examination and solid evidence. (Walsh, 1988) Nina Gabelko emphasizes that students need to enhance their cognitive sophistication. "By developing cognitive sophistication, students grow in critical thinking skills. They also learn to question and to develop personal meaning through their own experience or investigation." (Gabelko, 1988, p.276) Cognitive sophistication also increases self esteem which in turn reduces prejudice. (Klein, 1992, p.10) It is important to point out that according to the renown psychologist Piaget, cognitive sophistication does not normally occur until an individual reaches adolescence. (Steinberg, 1996) Therefore, it is critical that attempts at using this strategy are made during middle school and high school. It would be futile to use this approach any earlier simply because most children do not have the capacity to think critically.

Another way to reduce prejudice in the classroom is by using cooperative learning. Cooperative learning promotes a greater acceptance of differences by dealing directly with others rather than a stereotype. (Conard, 1988) When you encourage students to help each other learn and to value helping and cooperating there is less prejudice then before. Students also get to know each other well enough to see similarities, not just the differences that prolong prejudice. (Klein, 1992, p.10)

Cooperative learning may also improve a student's self esteem through possible acceptance within the group or successes made by the group. This improvement in self esteem is important because as stated earlier, a low self esteem is correlated with a less tolerant individual. Aronson outlined the 5 A's or ingredients needed for a strong self esteem: attention, acceptance, approval, acknowledgement, and affection. These "ingredients" should be received by a child from parents, teachers, friends and counselors. Self esteem "is not just feeling good about yourself, but it is a feeling that your life matters to theirs [parents, teachers, etc.] and to yourself." (1995, p.28) Learning how to respect one's self is probably one of the best ways to learn to respect people of other cultures.

A third way to combat racism is through the use of literature. Students should read biographies or autobiographies of people from a different backgrounds. (Gersten, 1974) Using novels and short stories will also help students to learn and explore the lives of people from cultures other then theirs. Autobiographies are especially helpful because "by reading stories in the first person students walk through the experience of discrimination and hardship that the characters must endure. Students not only become aware of the intolerance [shown toward or by the protagonist] they are able to make an emotional attachment to the victim." (Bauman,1995) This emotional attachment is exactly what is needed to break feelings of prejudice. Once a student understands that even though someone may be very different from themselves all people share the same

emotions, that student becomes more tolerant.

Incorporating audio-visual aids into a curriculum is still another excellent way to expose students to people of various cultures. There are computer software packages available that entertain and introduce students to various topics including the Civil Rights Movement or blues music. (Hawkins, 1995) Films are a great way to expose students to various cultures as well as discrimination throughout history. Contemporary films such as Schindler's List enable students to view the tremendous personal suffering of the Holocaust, while also teaching many of the customs of the Jewish faith. The story compels the viewer to sympathize and identify with the characters and horrible tragedy that they endured in Nazi Germany. Once a student identifies with or is moved by a character's actions, an emotional attachment and understanding has hopefully been made. More recently, Amistad is a powerful movie that depicts in graphic detail the true horror of the slave trade.

In conclusion, prejudice is a cultural disease that America as a nation has to treat. "Prejudice and discrimination conflict with our democratic values" and therefore pose a threat to our free government. (Byrnes, 1988, p.267) Prejudice causes "waste in human resources and talent, weakens our position as a nation, leads to delinquency and crime and lowers standards for us all." (Bettelheim, 1953, p.15) But most importantly, prejudice hurts people from all races. By working to overcome racism among individuals in our society, many of the problems listed above could be lessened. By teaching students to treasure their differences and

to enjoy their similarities, conflict would be reduced. Teaching tolerance is not an easy task, but it is one task that has been put off for too long.

Every Man Is In Some Ways
Like All Other Men,
Like Some Other Men
Like No Other Man

Clyde Kluckhohn

METHODOLOGY

Research Question: Does incorporating a "Teaching Tolerance" program within a Participation in Government curriculum create more tolerant individuals?

Participants: 70 students enrolled in Unatego High School's Participation in Government classes. All students were seniors and come from various socio-economic backgrounds. There was little variation in race or ethnicity. The exception was a foreign exchange student from Brazil.

Although all students participated in the program watching, reading, discussing and writing about various pieces, four students, randomly selected took part in a two part interview process.

Confidentiality was crucial in obtaining honest answers from the participants during the interviews. These four participants were aware that their answers would be held in the utmost confidence. No real names were used.

Instruments: The strategy of collecting data was through three channels; written responses in journals on articles read, an open-ended survey that all students completed 2 months after the unit ended, and the two part, pre-unit and post unit, interviews.

The written journal responses were reactions to two articles, "Nightriding with the Klan" and "A Rose for Charlie". A random sample was copied and included in the "Findings" part of this paper.

Approximately 2 months after the completion of the program an open-ended, confidential survey was completed by the participating students. This survey focused on ideas and stories that the students remembered as well as their overall feelings on the program, ie

whether they saw any importance in it.

The last component consisted of 4 two-part interviews with students that also were a part of the class. The pre-interview attempt was to obtain an idea of how tolerant the participants were before the program. The post-interview was to document any possible changes in the participant. Although there was a set of questions to discuss, the interviewer allowed the participant to elaborate on or discuss any part of the program in general.

The questions focused on the participant's personal background, their use of stereotypes as well as their reaction to people of different races, and different ethnicities, or to homosexuals.

All answers were recorded by using a tape recorder. Although a video recorder would have allowed for more interpretations of the participants (ie, facial expressions), it may have also caused the participant to feel uncomfortable and consequently the participant may not have given the most candid answers. A video recorder would also undermine the confidentiality of this project.

It is important to emphasize that the interviewer attempted to convey an attitude of complete acceptance regardless of the answers given and that the participants' information was valid and useful.

Procedures:

The pre-interviews were completed before the program commenced.

The program itself was incorporated into a Civil Liberties Unit. The Civil Liberties Unit initially focused on civil liberties of adolescents using recent Supreme Court Cases. It then shifted to civil liberties of all people.

On the first day after the "shift" to focusing on the civil liberties of

all people, the class viewed "The Shadow of Hate", a documentary outlining the history of intolerance in America. Homework was given to read and react to, in writing, "Nightriding with the Klan".

Day 2 consisted of a class discussion on the video followed by a discussion of the reading "Nightriding with the Klan". At the end of class on Day 2, "A Rose for Charlie" was distributed.

Day 3 began with a group discussion of "A Rose for Charlie". Then smaller groups of 4-5 students were also given various articles that discussed the possibility of a "sex gene", other personal stories of homosexuals and violent crimes against homosexuals to name a few. The students were asked to review the various articles and share information with group members. (This could possibly take 2 days)

Day 4 consisted of an introduction of "The Civil Rights Movement - Participation Without Voting" (lesson title). The most prominent civil rights groups and court cases were reviewed as well as the methods used and the importance of the media. Toward the end of the lesson the class started watching various segments of "Eyes on the Prize".

Day 5 continue watching "Eyes..."

Day 6 students took a short quiz on the Civil Rights Movement simply to check for basic understanding. They then began the culminating activity of this unit which was to write an essay answering the question, "What is the single most important liberty guaranteed by the Constitution, and which liberty is the most abused".

All materials used throughout the 6-7 day period are included in the appendices of this paper.

Two months following the end of the unit, the post-interviews were completed. All recorded interviews were

transcribed. Both the pre and post interviews were done in a quiet, empty classroom during the participants' studyhall period. Efforts were made to make the environment as comfortable as possible for the participant, ie. lighting, room temperature etc.

Data Analysis:

Various writing samples were copied from journals and complied with the transcripts of the pre and post interviews. Analysis was of a qualitative nature. Although all material was confidential and therefore nameless, participants answers and reactions were summarized paying particular attention to observations made by the researcher during the interviews, class discussions and through written samples. When reviewing the data collected from the entire class, particular focus was on what the students retained and any feedback they had on incorporating a "teaching tolerance" program into their curriculum.

When reviewing the interviews, attention was given to any possible changes that occurred in a participant's viewpoint.

Time Schedule:

This project ran approximately 4 months. It began in the fall semester during Participation in Government, but the open-ended survey was not completed until the spring semester. This was not a difficulty in that I teach the spring economics course and had all the same students again during the same time of the day.

Limitations:

The study was conducted at Unatego High School where the estimated 600 student population is vastly homogeneous with only a few minority students including 3 African American students and two foreign exchange students. Therefore, using 1997-98's senior class, only one minority student was involved in the study and he was a foreign exchange student from Brazil.

A second problem that I foresaw and

subsequently noticed was that some participants were not completely comfortable sharing all that the researcher hoped to understand, with their teacher.

FINDINGS

Optimistically, I started this study hoping to find that teaching tolerance in the classroom has a positive effect on all students. I had hoped that after the completion of the unit, my racist students would release their prejudices and biases and become more tolerant individuals. Realistically the program did not achieve such a lofty goal, but for the students that it did have an influence on, the program was well worth the time.

Teaching tolerance is important to me. My parents continuously stressed the need to respect others. My hometown was an extremely homogeneous community, therefore my father was compelled to expose me to numerous races by visiting several heterogeneous areas on vacations as well as inviting a "fresh air child" to our home for three weeks one summer. Despite attempts by my family to learn about and be acquainted with people of various backgrounds, I experienced intolerance as a child simply due to a few extra pounds around my middle. Even though my experience pales in comparison to what many other children with differences have had to contend with, I understand the potential long lasting impact of taunting and teasing. Aside from attempting to reduce violence in schools, we need to teach tolerance because as Sara Bullard writes, "all of our children will, at some time in their lives, be victims of intolerance. They will be rejected by others for a reason that is unfair; because of their size, their age, their gender, their skin

color, their language, their beliefs, their looks, or their disabilities. They will be hurt, some of them many times over. And one of the things they will learn from the experience of rejection is how to reject others." (1995, p.3) Teaching tolerance can break that vicious cycle of rejection among other negative side effects including violence. It offers a solution to problems seen not only in our schools, but in our streets. By teaching tolerance we may be able to stop some of the hurt and pain that intolerance causes.

QUALITATIVE PARADIGM

I chose a qualitative paradigm over a quantitative because it would be extremely difficult to accurately measure a person's tolerance or lack there of. I perceive a person's tolerance on a continuum raging from absolute intolerance to absolute tolerance. Most individuals fall in various places in between the two extremes. While "skin heads" fall close to, if not on absolute intolerance, individuals that are accepting of others regardless of sexual orientation, race, religion or disability lie closer to absolute tolerance. Many individuals may be "selectively tolerant", thus accepting of various races, yet intolerant of homosexuality. Another example of selective tolerance is when a person is tolerant of homosexuals yet unable to remain in the presence of a person with a facial disfiguration. My research question is simple and direct. Does a "Teaching Tolerance" program create more tolerant individuals? In other words, do the participants move closer on the continuum to absolute tolerance?

EXPLORATORY RESEARCH

As an exploratory research, I was able to examine data using a "reduction and interpretation" method. (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p.114) My data consisted of participants' words from personal interviews, in addition to written comments in journals and surveys. Also incorporated in my findings are my own observations of particular students. I was in an ideal setting to conduct a study such as this because as the participants teacher I know a great deal about the personalities, attitudes and backgrounds of most of the students. All data was complied and categorized and certain themes clearly emerged.

VALIDITY

Validity was achieved by comparing comments spoken in class discussion or through a personal interview, with reactions made in the participants' journal or survey. Although some students may have been more vocally racist in a class discussion, but gentler in a written response, most students appeared to give honest, consistent reactions even if the comment was "I don't know". During the interviewing process, the participants made a great deal of eye contact with the interviewer and through some laughs appeared at ease. The four students who participated in the interviews were for the most part individuals with strong personalities and are comfortable with me on a regular basis even if that means they have no reservations in complaining to me about a grade given on a test or a paper. Overall, the students who appeared to be more tolerant

remained so in class discussions as well as in personal written responses and my more intolerant students remained openly racist in class as well as in print. Another aspect that probably permitted the participants to be more open or honest in their responses was that many of the students were not aware of my ongoing research until permission slips were sent home two months after the culmination of the unit to complete the surveys.

As a qualitative, exploratory study the outcomes are dependant only to my group of participants. I was particularly interested in the impact of the program on all participating students individually. Realistically, I understood that all students were not going to make huge changes in their attitudes, but even minor changes would be worth the time involved.

Cumulative reactions to the readings, "Nightriding with the Klan" and "A Rose for Charlie" ranged from nausea to indifference, but overall the vast majority of students were empathetic to the victims in each of the stories. Aside from dealing with two groups of minorities, African-Americans in "Nightriding with the Klan" and homosexuals in "A Rose for Charlie", the readings reflect two different points of view. While "Knightriding with the Klan" focuses around possible explanations as to what makes a person racist and then to consequently join a hate group, "A Rose for Charlie" revolves around the victim and the life that a victim is forced to live.

REACTIONS TO "NIGHTRIDING WITH THE KLAN"

"Nightriding with the Klan" describes the sad, tortured life

of Tiger Knowles that led him to involvement in the Klan. Feeling accepted for the first time in his life, Tiger rose in the ranks of the organization and takes part in the lynching of a young black man, Michael Donald. After a civil suit in which Michael's mother, Beulah Mae Donald wins 7 million dollars in damages, Mrs. Donald forgives Tiger. In response to "Knightriding..." most students were appalled. Various reactions included:

> "...horrific..I can't imagine treating someone so cruelly..."
>
> "I was nauseated and felt uncontrollable anger, rage, disbelief, pity and contempt."

Other students engaged in questioning:

> "When are people going to learn that is O.K. to be different and most people are proud of it. Who's to say what's right and what's wrong?"
>
> "I don't understand how people can be so filled with hate."

More of my students' journal reactions revolved around why Tiger was racist. Clearly the article gave possible explanations as to why people are intolerant and the journal reactions reflect those explanations.

> "People join the KKK to feel accepted some place."
>
> "When someone like Tiger is feeling a little lonely and left out he felt like he had a family...or belonged."
>
> "The Klan is like a cult. Tiger found refuge in the Klan."
>
> "Most people have a deep need to feel a sense of belonging socially. To be part of a group that supports them and accepts them...Alienated individuals give consolation and friendship, but to some degree feel obligated to repay the debt and are

> therefore reluctant to oppose Klan practices, they perhaps find distasteful. Peer pressure at it's worst."
>
> "He just wanted to belong somewhere and that's the only place that he felt that way."
>
> "Attacks by blacks and a need to belong somewhere provides you with an understanding that these people did not start out monsters, that their insecurities and own sense of inferiority made them so."

When learning about hate crimes, students, as would adults, will look for reasons as to why a person commits an intolerant act. In order to understand why a tragic event occurred, it is human nature to attempt to find answers. Most immediate responses will include questions of "why"? Yet even though most students felt more comfortable giving reasons for Tiger's actions, one student refused to allow for justifications.

> "Blaming it on one's youth is just making excuses. People can rise above their own circumstances."

Logically, but ironically, some of the students reactions reflected complete intolerance of the intolerant.

> "I'd like to form a Klan against the Klan."
>
> "In my opinion, I believe all people should be treated equally and that anyone who associated with the KKK should be killed for what they did."

In order to be a tolerant person, we must be able to even tolerate intolerant people. For many, the only way to tolerate the intolerant is to give reasons for their actions as discussed previously. Even so, many students could not comprehend how Michael's mother was able to forgive Tiger. Although many students expressed their admiration and respect for Mrs. Donald in being

able to forgive Tiger, many admitted that they would find it extremely difficult, if not impossible to forgive him. On the other hand, one student articulated the need or importance of being tolerant of all, even Klan members.

> "Some Klans say that we hate Klans so we are racist and that's not true. I hate them for what they do and what they think, not for who they are."

Aside from the generic questions of how can people commit these kinds of atrocities, two students went as far as to question the Klan's ideals.

> "Most Klans claim to be Christian. They must not follow the bible as closely as they say they do. In the bible it says 'Thou shall not kill...Do one to others as you want them to do on to you'."

> "I have a real problem with the Klan because they are very contradictory to their religion. Most of them claim to be Christians, but the Christian religion teaches love everyone and every race."

Clearly these students recognize the illogic of the Klan's belief system.

Of course there was a small minority of students who were unaffected by the articles. Their responses to "Knightriding..." included:

> "All the things they did made sense to me. They [KKK members] didn't like gays, they didn't like cheaters, and they didn't like blacks killing and getting away with it."

> "I really like the death of people and I don't care...I think that everyone in the country should be of one race."

The students unmoved by the stories appeared to enjoy being racist. In one class discussion, 3 males would laugh when they received an adverse reaction from their peers after making a lewd remark. This

behavior called for a questioning of whether these students were absolutely intolerant or simply looking for attention. As their teacher, I concluded that their behavior was a combination of the two. Aside from enjoying the attention they did receive, other actions, including drawing Nazi swastikas and KKK symbols on their desks and notebooks affirm their racist beliefs.

One interesting observation that I made during that same class was that the ignorant reckless behavior of those three individuals actually had more impact on my more tolerant students in their resolve to become more tolerant and to persuade others to do so as well. From that class two of my female students were moved to action. One wrote a letter to the editor of our community newspaper pleading with parents to adopt a more tolerant way of life for the benefit of their children as well as for generations to come. The second student wrote an essay to the school newspaper emphasizing the importance of tolerance in our school. Because of the actions of my most racist students, others were moved to be more tolerant. They were able to witness first hand the face of hate and in acknowledging that hate, they saw the true ignorance of it.

REACTION TO "A ROSE FOR CHARLIE"

The second reading, "A Rose for Charlie" outlines the short life of Charlie, a homosexual teen who was taunted and sneered at from elementary school on. Refusing to hide his sexuality, he continued to be the victim of gay bashing until he was murdered at the age of 23 by 3 teenage boys who beat him then threw him off a

bridge even though he screamed out that he could not swim. Most of my students were shocked by the horror of this story. Many had not realized the extent to which homosexuals are persecuted. As one student wrote;

> "The article saddened me so much that I had to take a hour's pause after reading it to collect myself."

Even students who were completely intolerant of homosexuality felt that the teen boys went too far.

> "I think the article is quite harsh. I mean to throw someone over a bridge because they are homosexual. I can somewhat understand beating him up and leaving him there, but to kill a man because he is homosexual, especially after he told them that he could not swim..."

> "I do feel sorry for Charlie, but I still don't think gay and lesbian couples are right...yet even though I don't agree with homosexuals, Charlie and all homosexuals do not deserve what happened to Charlie."

In class discussions after the article these same ideas were expressed and several conclusions were drawn. Yet the most profound conclusion that received majority approval was that what some believe to be "innocent gay bashing" leads to greater, more tragic acts of violence. In other words, taunting and harassing homosexuals can be the prelude to physical abuse.

The author of "A Rose for Charlie" did a great job at allowing students to comprehend the hell of growing up homosexual. One student stated that she would have dropped out of school. Other students felt sick to their stomachs after the reading. "A Rose for Charlie" emphasized how hard it would be if one was not even comfortable around his own family. Many students reflected on the sadness that a rejection from your family would cause. "Mike's"

post interview follows those similar beliefs;

> "It just opened me up to an oppressed person's perspective. I wouldn't want that to happen to me. I mean if something like that were to happen to me, I wouldn't want it to."

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS

Aside from reactions to the actual content of the reading, I was impressed by the insight expressed. Some students went as far as to blame society for allowing intolerance to continue.

> "...the death of Charlie is not entirely the teenage boys' fault...Society make people think that being homosexual is an evil and bad thing to be. Society needs to take some blame."

Other students wrote directly about hate and its consequences;

> "Hate is a frightening emotion that spawns from the fear of things that people do not understand."
>
> "Hate is a learned behavior."
>
> "Hate is passed down from generation to generation. It will never stop, however, it can be suppressed and everyone needs to do their best to try to erase these fears and prejudice."
>
> "[intolerant people] have warped views because they are blinded with hate."
>
> "Seeing the mistakes of the generations before me I have learned to be tolerant of everyone and their ways of living, but others are not aware that the names they use are wrong and hateful. The point that I am trying to make is young children learn from example and then pass it on to others. I have learned to accept people through the example of my parents and others."

Although some may argue that teaching tolerance to a group of 16, 17, and 18 year old adolescents is pointless because they have already developed their value system, I would strongly disagree.

After reviewing the written and spoken comments of my students I realized that due to their more sophisticated cognition these students were better able to see the viewpoints of others. As other researchers have mentioned, including Nina Gabelko and Debbie Walsh, teaching tolerance to adolescents is possible because of their higher levels of cognition. Older adolescents think in more abstract terms and therefore have the ability to question values that they once may have believed to be absolute. They are able to debate and question, "Are these the values of my parents, or are they my own?"

Still another component of all the data collected were the various comments made on "seeing the other side". In being able to step into the shoes of another, we can better understand people's differences and consequently move one step closer toward tolerance. This program clearly gave an opportunity for students to view life from other perspectives.

> "I saw so many different things in another's eyes. I didn't only think how things made me feel."
>
> "It opened my eyes more to how other people truly live and feel."
>
> "It helped me look at both sides of things better."
>
> "I realized that they can be hurt sometimes even if you don't realize what you are doing may be hurtful."
>
> "It made me realize they have feelings and they are people too."
>
> "I realized that they can't help who they are."
>
> "I realize now that many minorities do not have many rights just because they are minorities."

> "I have a better understanding of how much we take for granted."

PARTICIPANT ACTION

Much to my pleasure, a few of my students were motivated to action at the close of the program.

> "I hated them [the articles]. They made me feel enraged and at the same time broke my heart. They made me want to do something."

As stated previously, one student wrote a letter to the editor of our community newspaper. Another student wrote an essay for the school newspaper. Still another student was moved to do her final paper/presentation on increasing the rights of gays in the United States. An apparent result of this program is that it brings the problem of intolerance to the forefront of discussion. Students realize that intolerance is not a problem of the past, but one problem that their generation will be forced to contend. Intolerance and all of its horrible side effects, is going to have an impact on their own children.

Many students commented that society has to make changes in order for intolerance to lessen.

> "Grown-ups have to watch out for the way they treat others. They are not setting a good example for the generations to come."

> "If society encouraged sexual expression to a reasonable extent, rather than repression, then a significant number of sexually related hate crimes would go down."

USE OF STEREOTYPES

The interviews and surveys revealed a constant use of stereotypes by all students regardless of their tolerance level.

Although some students acknowledged that stereotypes maybe inaccurate, they continued to use them even though the vast majority of my students could be regarded as "selectively tolerant". In spite of the belief that stereotypes may be untrue, many students believed other stereotypes to be accurate. Subsequently, while a student may be empathetic toward victims like Charlie, they still could not be comfortable with or tolerate of homosexuals. However, what must be emphasized is that the main purpose of the program "Teaching Tolerance" is not to force acceptance of a certain individual's sexual orientation or culture. The main purpose of the program is for students to become more understanding of differences, to see the pain and unnecessary suffering intolerance causes, to acknowledge truly ignorant beliefs that foster intolerance. Through this type of cognitive growth toward tolerance, students will better allow differences to exist with less interference or disrespect with more tolerance. As Sara Bullard writes, "We often think of intolerance as a social phenomenon - the hatred, prejudice and stereotypes held against whole groups of people. But intolerance is an every day habit...half of all marriages end in divorce. Five children die each day from abuse or neglect. Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women." (1995, p.10) Intolerance is a part of the American culture. We live with it each and every day, yet we must continue to try to acknowledge and understand our intolerance. Only then can we move into a more peaceful culture. As written by one of my students;

> "Hatred and intolerance are very ugly things. In the thousands upon thousands of years that humans

> have lived together, it is sad that never have we found a way to get along together. We think that humans are so civilized and yet we are the only creatures in the world that kill other members of our species for such trivial things as skin color."

RESEARCHER OBSERVATIONS

My first lesson learned through this study was that as with any program, the impact on students is going to vary among the individuals. Yes, there were at least five students (from what I could tell) unaffected by the readings, videos and discussions. In fact, the most intolerant students were not as vocal as others. They did not laugh. They took the class discussion seriously because their values were being questioned. Other intolerant students were overly vocal suggesting another explanation for some of their words. In fact one of my "intolerant" students conceded that the unit "helped me look at both sides of things better," yet then he added, "I'm still for an Aryan nation."

The vast majority of my students expressed sympathy or empathy for the victims of intolerance. They were "horrified", "shocked", "enraged", and "saddened". Much to their surprise, they also remembered a great deal of the details from the stories 3 months after the unit when they completed the survey. People do remember stories that touch our emotions. These stories did just that. "A Rose for Charlie" personalized being gay while "Knightriding with the Klan" provided those much needed reasons for why people behave the way that they do. By giving the students writing assignment on the articles, they were forced to think about and ask certain questions about their own prejudices and values. Through the writing process they formulated and articulated some powerful

thoughts. Words such as those that follow given during a post interview made me truly believe that the unit made a difference.

> "Yeah, cause I used to be, I don't know...Homosexuals grossed me out. But now I accept them more because that is who they are and there is nothing they can do about it. They are going to be gay no matter what so you might as well learn to live with it."

Conversely, as mentioned above, all students did not become more tolerant, but posed the possibility of change.

> "It was a bit too much. It was pretty bad and we shouldn't be doing this. No teacher can teach tolerance. People learn by themselves. The way they were raised. No law in the world can make them change. To change the way you think you have to experience something great."

In this student's last sentence, he eludes to the possibility for change, although it would be difficult in his case. He once told me that his father was really upset because his confederate flag had been stolen the day after he hung in on his porch.

It was also interesting to see how selectively tolerant the students were. Many were fairly tolerant toward other religions and races, but not toward homosexuals. One student wrote;

> "I personally do not feel the KKK is right."

but later stated;

> "[homosexuals] should keep it to themselves."

Another student commented in response to "Knightriding...";

> "I think that if we took everyone in the world, mixed them together, them we would the superior race."

Later this same individual suggested that with homosexuals

> "We should do what the Amish do. We should shun them instead of hurting them."

The students asserted that they were selective intolerant of homosexuals because they believed homosexuals choose their sexual orientation, African-Americans can not control the color of their skin. Some students were open to the possibility of homosexuality being genetically determined after examining various articles on the biological research. Yet others remained adamant in their position that homosexuals chose to be homosexual and therefore are wrong and should be judged.

The most obvious observation in my classes was that although there were a few girls that vocally expressed their discomfort with homosexuality, the five most intolerant individuals were male. Of those five, intelligence did not appear to be a factor in that although not one of the five achieved above an 80-85%, the potential was there for at least three of the individuals. The common thread among the five participants, other then their gender, was the blatant intolerance of their fathers. Other then the one student whose father was proud to fly a confederate flag, another came to a realization during an open class discussion that the reason that he did not like homosexuals was because his father disliked them. He went on to explain that his father had told him that if he ever decided to be gay, he would kill him.

CONCLUSION

Does incorporation "Teaching Tolerance" program within a curriculum create more tolerant individuals?

Researchers such as Jan Arnow believe that integrating multicultural education within a curriculum prepares children to "understand the social, historical and psychological environment that cause people, including themselves, to think and behave as we do as well as to become sensitive to other cultures and knowledgeable about other viewpoints and accurately assess similarities and differences among people of the world." (1995, p. 78-79) Arnow also emphasizes the importance of the entire school incorporating a multicultural program for students to learn throughout their entire educational career. Ironically many schools use the approach of "monthly celebrations, cultural posters and world fairs... that can actually reinforce stereotypes by emphasizing exotic differences between people." (1995, p.79) The "Teaching Tolerance" program does more then highlight one special day or one heroic person. The program allows students to feel, or understand the viewpoint of another. The program reveals the true ignorance of hate. In addition, the program creates empathy by reaching the students emotions. Children as well as adults learn and remember through emotion. All of the aforementioned reasons explain why the program is so powerful. It would be unrealistic to believe that all students will be touched or changed by the program, but for the students that it does have an impact on the difference is well worth the time involved. As demonstrated in my classes, the students who were in the gray areas- or middle of the road, not absolutely intolerant but wary of differences - moved toward greater tolerance. They better understood their own prejudices and by acknowledging them, they could work to reduce

them. As I told my classes, it is much easier to simply allow yourself to be prejudice. In order to be more tolerant you have to make conscience efforts to fight your own stereotypes. In doing so, you allow others to enjoy life as you do.

The program allowed for a forum within my classroom in which students were able to actually see the face of hate within their racist classmates. This hatred moved some more tolerant students to action trying to persuade others to work at being more tolerant through public written expression. For others, the hatred displayed by intolerant students revealed how ugly intolerance was and gave more reason to be accepting of others. The program moved the "middle of the road" individuals toward greater tolerance for they did not want to appear ignorant as their intolerant classmates had appeared to be.

I will continue to teach tolerance within my classroom using many of the materials I used throughout my research. There will always be students that will resist and dislike the time taken during class, but the vast majority of the students enjoyed the experience. Many of the students were eager to discuss topics that have been often referred to as taboo. They also appreciated the opportunity to express their opinions regardless of their tolerance level. They took refuge in realizing that many of their classmates had some of the same fears or reservations. Yet by discussing those fears and reservations they were able to lessen them. One of my proudest moments was when my interviewee, "Kathy" went from being adamantly opposed to a having homosexual as a college roommate to "I don't know". This slight change in answer showed that "Kathy"

was questioning her previous attitude.

Overall, the program worked on various levels within my classes not only through the readings and videotape but through the classmembers themselves and what they see in each other. The program can not be quantitatively evaluated because it affected each student in vastly different ways. Yet even if it simply started a questioning of stereotypes or of differences in people, the program has served an important purpose. Clearly, more has to be done to improve tolerance in America. For African-American, as Senator Bill Bradley stated, "The Civil Rights Laws of the 60's and 70's opened doors, but the races still have to learn to live together."(Fineman, May 1991, p. 26) For homosexuals the work has only begun through legislation allowing homosexuals to legally marry in Hawaii. Yet in order to become more tolerant we have to not only promote legislation to protect the rights of certain minorities, we have to change attitudes in general. It is time that teachers confront the problems of intolerance. No one can argue that it is very difficult to soften the attitudes of a child raised in a house decorated with swastikas, but we can not stop trying. Even my most racist student acknowledged the possibility for change. As David Ruenzel writes, the issue of race has been "swept under the rug because of fears of confrontation." (Spring 97, p.21) An educator can not avoid a subject due to this fear because through that confrontation kids learn. The confrontations that occurred in my 8th period class made me extremely uncomfortable, but I realized the importance of it. The vast majority of my class saw hate and ignorance. They not only questioned the actions of

their peers but they questioned themselves as well. As a result of that questioning, they grew. They grew into more tolerant individuals.

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